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64TH CONGRESS, 1st Session. | HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. | DOCUMENT No. 579.

WHITE RIVER AT DEVALL BLUFF, ARK.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING,

WITH A LETTER FROM THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, REPORT ON REEXAMINATION OF WHITE RIVER AT DEVALL BLUFF, ARK.

JANUARY 15, 1916.—Referred to the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and ordered to be printed, with illustration.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 13, 1916.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated 11th instant, together with copies of reports from Maj. A. B. Putnam and Maj. E. M. Markham, Corps of Engineers, dated May 14, 1915, and August 9, 1915, on reexamination of White River at Devall Bluff, Ark., made in compliance with the provisions of the river and harbor act approved March 4, 1915.

Very respectfully,

LINDLEY M. GARRISON,
Secretary of War.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,
Washington, January 11, 1916.

From: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army.
To: The Secretary of War.
Subject: Reexamination of White River at Devall Bluff, Ark.

1. Under authority of section 14 of the river and harbor act approved March 4, 1915, there are submitted herewith for transmission to Congress report dated May 14, 1915, by Maj. A. B. Putnam, Corps

of Engineers, and report dated August 9, 1915, by Maj. E. M. Markham, Corps of Engineers, relative to the project for improvement of White River at Devall Bluff, Ark.

2. The existing project for improvement of this locality has in view the prevention of a cut-off in the river by the construction of 1,250 feet of bank revetment, at an estimated cost of $14,000, provided that local interests contribute $6,000 of this amount. The project was adopted by the act of March 4, 1913, which appropriated therefor $8,000, being the full share of the expense to be borne by the United States. The necessary contribution by local interests has not been made, and the district officer reports that physical changes have occurred which would greatly increase the cost of the desired protection. There appears to be no prospect of securing the cooperation required of local interests, and he therefore recommends that the project be abandoned. The division engineer and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors concur in this recommendation.

3. After due consideration of the above-mentioned reports, I concur in the views of the district officer, the division engineer, and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, and therefore recommend that legislation be enacted authorizing the abandonment of the project for improvement of White River at Devall Bluff, Ark.

DAN C. KINGMAN,
Chief of Engineers, United States Army.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS.

[Fourth indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
September 15, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. This report on White River at Devall Bluff, Ark., is submitted under authority of that portion of section 14 of the act of March 4, 1915, which reads, "and the Chief of Engineers is directed to make a report upon any other projects, river or harbor, the further improvement of which under present conditions is undesirable, or in which modifications of the plans or projects should be made."

2. The project for this locality, adopted by the act of March 4, 1913, provides for the construction of 1,250 feet of bank revetment at an estimated cost of $14,000, provided that local interests contribute $6,000 of this amount. The report upon which the project is based was submitted in 1913, and published in House Document No. 1259, Sixty-second Congress, third session. It seemed clear at that time that the improvement desired was not justified wholly in the interests of navigation, and it was recommended only with the understanding that local interests would contribute the amount specified. Moreover, conditions have changed in the meantime, so that the original estimate is no longer sufficient to cover the probable cost of the work, which is now reported to be $30,500. It seems now that there is no prospect of cooperation as required, and as the improvement is not considered advisable without such coopera-

tion, the board concurs with the district officer and the division engineer, and recommends legislation authorizing the abandonment of this project.

For the board:

FREDERIC V. ABBOT,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member Present.

REEXAMINATION OF WHITE RIVER AT DEVALL BLUFF, ARK.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Little Rock, Ark., May 14, 1915.

From: The District Engineer Officer.
To: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army
(Through the Division Engineer).
Subject: White River at Devall Bluff, Ark.—Abandonment or modification of project.

1. The following report upon the advisability of abandoning or modifying the project for improving White River at Devall Bluff, Ark., is submitted in compliance with instructions dated May 1, 1915.

2. The project for the improvement of White River at Devall Bluff is to prevent a cut-off in the river near that town by revetting the bank along the upstream side of the threatened peninsula, at an estimated cost of $14,000. Of this amount, $8,000 is to be furnished by the Government and $6,000, together with free stumpage on brush, is to be furnished by the town of Devall Bluff. This project was adopted by the river and harbor act of March 4, 1913, the appropriation being based on the report printed in House Document No. 1259, Sixty-second Congress, third session.

3. The question of the prevention of a cut-off near Devall Bluff is an old one. On September 8, 1897, the district engineer officer made a report to the Chief of Engineers on this subject, and basing his views on the fact that Devall Bluff was then a comparatively important river town, stated that the cut-off should be prevented. In third indorsement, dated May 16, 1901, the district engineer officer submitted an estimate for preventing the cut-off, but did not express an opinion as to the worthiness of the work. The river and harbor act of June 13, 1902, in the item for improving White River, made provision that $7,500 might, if required in the interest of navigation, be used to prevent a cut-off in said river between Choctaw Railway bridge and Devall Bluff. Referring to that provisional appropriation of $7,500, the district engineer officer, under date of August 29, 1902, reported that revetting the banks would cost $9,850, that there was not then any immediate danger of the cut-off being formed and that the prevention of the cut-off was not then needed in the interest of commerce and navigation. He recommended that the fund be not applied to the prevention of the cut-off, but that it be expended in snagging operations between the mouth of the river and Newport, Ark. That recommendation was approved by the division engineer, the Chief of Engineers, and the Secretary of War. The river and

harbor act of June 25, 1910, ordered a preliminary examination and survey of this locality, with a view to the improvement for navigation and the revetment of banks in cooperation with local interests. The district engineer officer's report on the preliminary examination, printed in House Document 1259, Sixty-second Congress, third session, was unfavorable. This examination covered the question of the prevention of the cut-off and the stoppage of erosion or sliding of the bank along the town front. The division engineer did not concur in this so far as the question of preventing the cut-off was involved. The Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors recommended that survey and estimate be made. This report was favorable as to the prevention of the cut-off if supplemented by local interest and contribution. The estimated cost, as previously stated, was $14,000, of which $8,000 was to be borne by the Government and $6,000 and free stumpage on brush was to be furnished by the town of Devall Bluff. The town of Devall Bluff has not furnished the contributory fund and there has not been any expenditure under the project.

4. Since 1897, the importance of Devall Bluff as a river point has been gradually decreasing. This seems to be largely due to the construction of a branch line of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway from a point near Devall Bluff to Searcy, Ark., via Des Arc, a river town 25 miles upstream from Devall Bluff. This line was the cause of the suspension of operations of the daily packet between Des Arc and Devall Bluff and also the cause for erection of sawmills at Des Arc. These mills draw timber from the same territory that supplied Devall Bluff. A comparison of the tonnage centering at Devall Bluff in the last few years is:

Articles.	1897	1910	1911	1914
	Short tons.	*Short tons.*	*Short tons.*	*Short tons.*
Plantation products, merchandise, etc	4,006			
Forest products (saw logs, rough staves, etc.)	8,793	2,613	3,438	1,100
Mussel shells		400	800	599
Total	12,799	3,013	4,238	1,699

Offsetting this, however, there was on the 3d of April of this year an unheralded revival of river commerce at this point, along entirely different lines of anything heretofore done in this river. It was the commencement of shipment by barge lines of bauxite from Devall Bluff to East St. Louis, Ill. This commerce originates in the bauxite fields 20 miles southwest from Little Rock, Ark. Heretofore it has been moved by rail from the mines to East St. Louis. This movement is said to be about 255,000 short tons a year at the present time. The present yearly output of the mines is said to be 300,000 short tons a year, and the proved ground is said to show mineral enough to continue this output for 20 years. It is understood that the present movement of the bauxite by rail from the mines to Devall Bluff, 69 miles, and then by water to East St. Louis, 700 miles, is a tentative one to determine whether or not it can be moved more economically this way than by the all-rail movement heretofore used. To the date of writing this report eight barges, containing 4,100 short tons of ore, have been moved from Devall Bluff. The towing is to be done by four steamers—the *Jewell*, 49

net registered tons, and the *Bart Tully*, 63 net registered tons, to be used to tow the barges to the mouth of White River, where they are to be turned over to the *Josh Cook*, 384 net registered tons, and the *Barrett*, 620 net registered tons, for movement up the Mississippi River to East St. Louis. The Devall Bluff local representative of this enterprise appears to be imbued with the belief that, as soon as arrangements are perfected, the movement of bauxite through Devall Bluff will be approximately 225,000 short tons a year.

5. I have caused an examination to be made of this locality, in so far as the present conditions at the place of the threatened cut-off are concerned. This examination showed an unexpected increase in the rate of caving along the upper side of the peninsula and a more marked effect in the way of surface scour by the water flowing over the neck when it is submerged. The neck is now so narrowed that, in addition to the revetment originally proposed, some means—a levee along the neck or some other scheme—will have to be used to prevent the top scour, and also further erosion in the bank on the downstream side of the neck will have to be prevented. This change in conditions renders the original estimate inadequate to do the work now needed. The failure of the town of Devall Bluff to raise the contributory fund renders the project inoperative. Therefore, I must recommend the entire abandonment of the project, not because of unworthiness, but because of insufficient funds being available to do the work now needed.

6. Before the days of regulation of freight rates by General Government and State control, this river at this place had an effect on the railway rates into this section. Now, however, since the intrastate rail rates are based on length of haul and river points in Arkansas ignored in the intrastate tariff, as well as in the interstate tariffs, that effect has been lost. The movement of bauxite recently inaugurated through this place points to a latent control over exorbitant rail rates still inherent in the river.

7. The question of water power, terminal facilities, or kindred subjects does not enter into this examination.

8. Map of the locality is inclosed. This map has been revised to show the present bank line along the upper side of the threatened peninsula. At other points the lines are shown as on previous map, there not being change enough in these to make it worth while to pay any attention to it at this time.

A. B. PUTNAM,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

[First indorsement.]

OFFICE DIVISION ENGINEER, WESTERN DIVISION,
St. Louis, Mo., May 22, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. Forwarded.

2. In view of the fact that the town of Devall Bluff has not furnished the contribution required by act of Congress it is recommended that this project be abandoned.

C. McD. TOWNSEND,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers.

[Third indorsement.]

BOARD OF ENGINEERS FOR RIVERS AND HARBORS,
June 29, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. The present and prospective shipments of bauxite from Devall Bluff appear to warrant further investigation before report is submitted on the subject of the abandonment of the project. It is therefore requested that the district officer give further information regarding the precise location of the wharves from which the bauxite is now shipped; the probable effect of a cut-off upon those shipments, the practicability of keeping the channel open up to the wharves, if the cut-off occurs, the feasibility of the wharves being located at some other point beyond the influence of the cut-off, and a plan and estimate of preventing the cut-off. A statement should also be given of additional shipments, if any, and the prospects of successful continuance of this traffic.

For the board.

W. M. BLACK,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers,
Senior Member of the Board.

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON REEXAMINATION OF WHITE RIVER AT DEVALL BLUFF, ARK.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
UNITED STATES ENGINEER OFFICE,
Little Rock, Ark., August 9, 1915.

From: The District Engineer Officer.
To: The Chief of Engineers, United States Army
(Through the Division Engineer).
Subject: White River at Devall Bluff, Ark.—Reexamination of project.

1. In compliance with paragraph 2 of your letter dated July 14, 1915, the following report is submitted containing the additional information desired by the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors in connection with the reexamination of the project for improving White River at Devall Bluff, Ark.

2. Referring to the map which accompanied the original report of May 14, 1915, the wharf or dock from which bauxite is now shipped is located at the upstream end of the town at point marked "3." The ore platform alongside the railway track is 175 feet long, and accommodates five cars. From midlength of the ore platform a plank wheelbarrow runway leads to the barges being loaded.

3. It is probable that this dock will be available for loading purposes for about two years after a cut-off shall have occurred, at the expiration of which it is likely that dredging, roughly estimated at $5,000 annually, will be required to maintain a channel to the dock.

4. There are two feasible locations for wharves at other points within the proximity of Devall Bluff beyond the influence of the threatened cut-off. One is on the left bank of the river about one-half mile above the bridge shown on the map hereinbefore referred to;

the second, on the right bank of the river, about 1 mile below the present wharf. At either site the ground is overflowed about 4 feet during extreme high water. Access to the upper site will require the construction of about 1 mile of railway, of which one-quarter of a mile will be through the overflow. Use of the lower site will require the construction of about 2 miles of railway, of which probably not over 600 feet will be in overflow. At either site the storage bins and loading platform will necessarily be on piling, since the banks will be submerged during high water.

5. The shippers of bauxite desire prevention of the cut-off because, as they state, the present site is entirely suitable, that a change of location will entail much expense, and that the two alternative sites just suggested are objectionable by reason of the overflow as well as their distance from town.

6. With regard to the probable effect of a cut-off upon the shipment of bauxite from Devall Bluff, it is my opinion that the continuation of shipments from this point, regardless of the question of a cut-off, is a matter of freight charges by the railway companies which handle the material from the mines to the reduction plant in East St. Louis. At present the miners and shippers of bauxite are dissatisfied with the all-rail rate and also with the rate from the mines to Devall Bluff, and it is understood that they are seeking another outlet to the Mississippi River, even to the extent of contemplating the construction of an independent line from the mines to deep water. At best the present movement of bauxite through Devall Bluff does not appear to indicate any permanency and will probably cease with an adjustment of rate difference, or the development by the mining company of an independent connection to other water points.

7. The commerce which centered at Devall Bluff during the calendar year 1914 comprised the following:

	Short tons.	Estimated value.
Rafted saw logs	1,100	$2,200
Mussel shells	599	8,985
Total	1,699	11,185

8. As to an estimate for preventing cut-off, recent examination indicates that a levee will be required along the neck to guard against further cross flow, since serious surface scour has developed. Such a levee constructed from point marked "C" to point marked "D" on the map hereinbefore referred to will cost about $12,500. To prevent further erosion of the bank by the construction of revetment from point marked "A" to a point about 500 feet below "B" will cost about $18,000, making a total expenditure of $30,500. By reason of the uncertainty of the continuation of bauxite shipments through this point, I am constrained to report that the navigation interests involved do not warrant this expenditure by the General Government. Funds have been available for the prevention of cut-off at the point in question since March 4, 1913, contingent upon local cooperation to the extent of $6,000. The contribution required has

not been forthcoming, suggesting an obvious lack of any critical interest. As the matter now stands the principal beneficiary of any Government expenditure would be the bauxite company. Should it be concluded that the proposition is meritorious, it is recommended that 50 per cent be required to be contributed by "local interests."

E. M. MARKHAM,
Major, Corps of Engineers.

[First indorsement.]

OFFICE DIVISION ENGINEER, WESTERN DIVISION,
St. Louis, Mo., August 17, 1915.

To the CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY:

1. The failure of local interests to contribute the comparatively small amount of $6,000 toward the prevention of a cut-off, as required by the act of March 4, 1913, would seem to indicate that the people of this community are not seriously interested in the matter.

2. It is recommended that no more money be expended by the United States for the improvement of navigation in this vicinity until local interests have contributed $6,000 toward the construction of the levee referred to in the first part of paragraph 8, which is estimated to cost $12,500.

3. Since the report was written the Arkansas Railroad Commission (on Aug. 12) ordered a reduction (effective on Aug. 23) on freight rates applying to bauxite ore in carload lots, as reported in the accompanying clipping from the Arkansas Gazette, of Little Rock, Ark.

C. McD. TOWNSEND,
Colonel, Corps of Engineers.

[For report of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, see p. 2.]

[Extract from the Arkansas Gazette, Little Rock, Ark., Aug. 13, 1915.]

RATES ON BAUXITE ARE MADE LOWER—RAILROAD COMMISSION ORDERS REDUCTIONS AVERAGING 15 PER CENT.

The Arkansas Railroad Commission yesterday ordered a reduction in freight rates averaging 15 per cent on crushed or rough stone, sand, gravel, bauxite ore, asphalt, bituminous rock, and cinders when shipped in carload lots, through a reclassification of all commodities listed under item 815–A of Standard Freight Distance Tariff No. 5. Under the order all are to go in carload lots at the rate of brick. The rate on bauxite shipped between Bauxite and Devall Bluff was reduced from 90 to 80 cents per ton and from Gibbons to Devall Bluff from 70 cents to 60 cents per ton. The American Bauxite Co. had asked that the rate from Gibbons be reduced to 50 cents per ton, under Standard Freight Distance Tariff No. 3. The rates ordered yesterday are effective August 23.

The decision of the commission followed hearings on petitions of the American Bauxite Co. for lower rates on bauxite and from the State highway commission for lower rates on crushed rock. Both rates are reduced under the order. Under the old No. 3 tariff the rate on bauxite from Bauxite to Devall Bluff was 90 cents per ton. Of this the Rock Island received 50 cents and the Bauxite & Northern Railroad, owned by the American Bauxite Co., received 40 cents. Under the No. 5 tariff the rate was unchanged, but the Rock Island was given 70 of the 90 cents per ton. The bauxite company claimed this rate, which amounted to 70 cents per ton in addition to the cost of hauling over its own road to Gibbons, was too high. The length of the haul over the Bauxite & Northern is less than 1 mile of the total of approximately 69 miles.

The rates ordered yesterday follow: 25 miles and under, 2 cents per 100 pounds; 50 miles and over 25 miles, 2½ cents per 100 pounds; 75 miles and over 50 miles, 3 cents per 100 pounds; 100 miles and over 75 miles, 3½ cents per 100 pounds; 150 miles and over 100 miles, 4 cents per 100 pounds; 200 miles and over 150 miles, 5 cents per 100 pounds; 250 miles and over 200 miles, 6 cents per 100 pounds; 300 miles and over 250 miles, 7 cents per 100 pounds; 400 miles and over 300 miles, 8 cents per 100 pounds; 400 miles and over, 9 cents per 100 pounds. Differential to be added when transported over two lines, 1½ cents per 100 pounds; differential to be added when transported over three or more lines, 2 cents per 100 pounds; minimum carload weight to be the marked capacity of the car.

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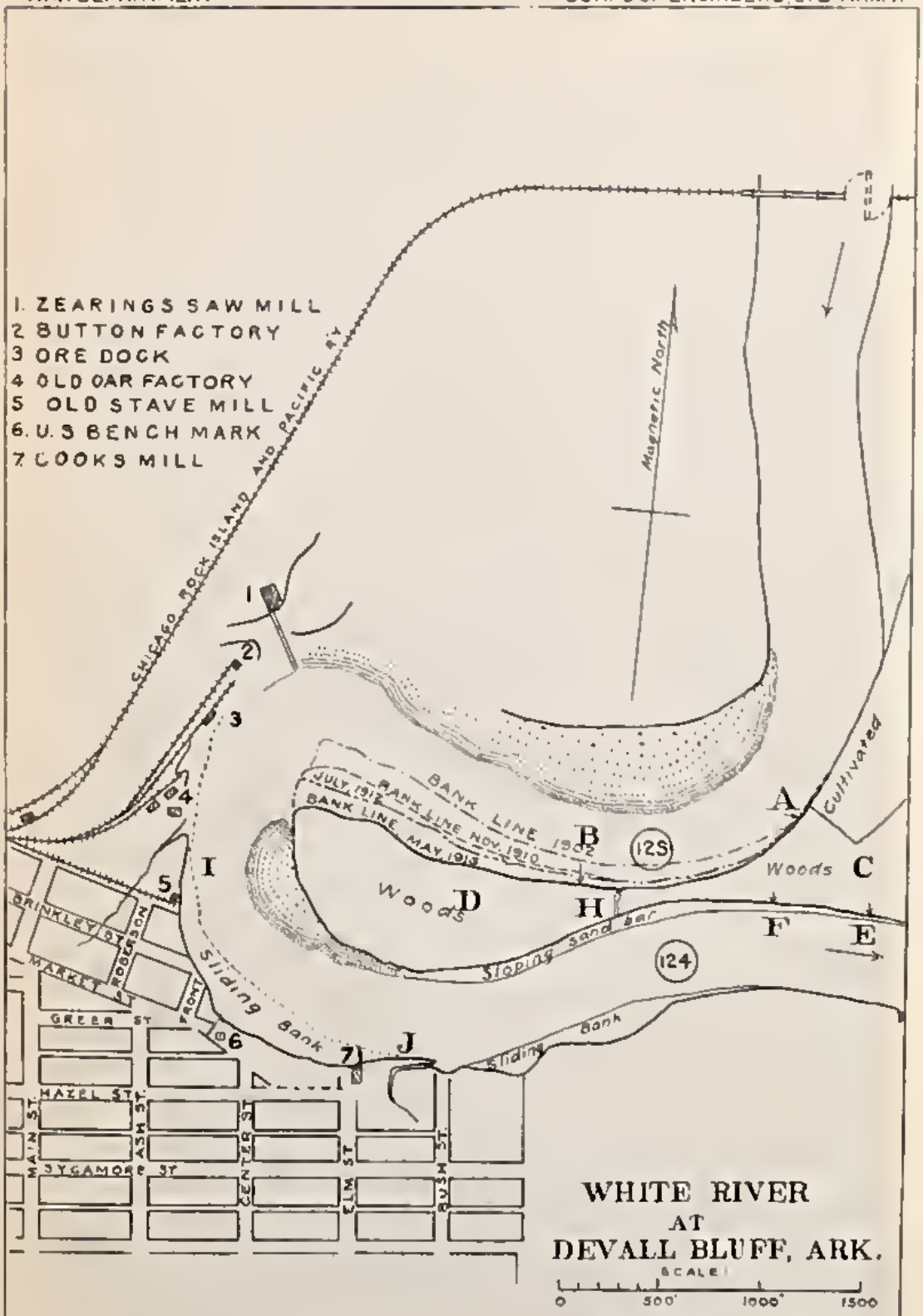
https://archive.org/details/whiteriveratdeva00unit



WHITE RIVER AT DEVALL BLUFF, ARK.

To accompany report to Chief of Engineers, U.S.A. dated May 14, 1915 on revision or abandonment of project for White River at DeVall Bluff, Ark.

U.S. Engineer Office
Little Rock, Ark.
May 14 1915

M. B. Adams
Major, Corps of Engineers, U.S.A.

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House Doc. No. 579; 64th Cong., 1st Sess.